

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 IO-04 ISO-00 SAJ-01 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-04

INR-05 LAB-01 NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 NIC-01 DODE-00

PM-03 H-01 L-01 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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R 171542Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY MADRID
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 243
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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, SP

SUBJECT: SPANISH STRIKE AND LABOR SCENE

REF MADRID 6361

BEGIN SUMMARY: WIDESPREAD SPANISH STRIKE ACTIVITY CONTINUES
PARTICULARLY IN BILBAO AND BARCELONA AREAS, WITH SOME STRIKES
AND WORK STOPPAGES HAVING ENDED, OTHER NEW ONES HAVING
COMMENCED, AND WITH RETALIATORY COMPANY LOCKOUTS ALSO
COMMON. MOST STRIKES HAVE BEEN SPONTANEOUS AND STEMMED
FROM ECONOMIC MOTIVES, BUT HAVE BEEN RAPIDLY POLITICIZED
BY CLANDESTINE LABOR GROUPS, IN SOME CASES BY THE COMMUNIST-
DOMINATED WORKERS COMMISSIONS ALTHOUGH IN MANY OTHERS BY
NON-COMMUNIST LABOR GROUPS. HIGHLY SIGNIFICANT FEATURE
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OF OCT 6 ARREST OF 47 PERSONS, LARGELY CATALAN COMMUNISTS,

AT BARCELONA CONVENT IN CONNECTION WITH CURRENT SEAT STRIKES, WAS PRESENCE AMONG THOSE DETAINED OF FOUR ITALIAN TRADE UNION REPRESENTATIVES FROM FIAT IN TURIN (AT LEAST TWO FROM CGIL) WHO WERE EXPELLED FROM SPAIN FEW DAYS LATER. DIRECT INVOLVEMENT ITALIAN TRADE UNION MEMBERS IN SPANISH STRIKE IS RELATIVELY NEW PHENOMENON. EARLIER THIS YEAR DURING TWO DIFFERENT STRIKES THE MODERATE SPANISH CATHOLIC USO CLANDESTINE TRADE UNION WAS SUCCESSFUL IN SECURING INTERVENTION OF CHARLES LEVINSON OF INTER-NATIONAL CHEMICAL WORKERS FEDERATION (ICF) WITH BELGIAN AND DUTCH PARENT COMPANIES IN ORDER TO FORCE SPANISH SUBSIDIARIES TO SETTLE TWO USO STRIKES ON STRIKERS TERMS. END SUMMARY.

1. SINCE SUBMISSION REFTEL (A) STRIKE 13,000 WORKERS AT RENAULT PLANT IN VALLADOLID HAS ENDED AND WORKERS NOW BACK AT WORK; (B) 1,000 STRIKING WORKERS AT ROBERT BOSCH FACTORY IN MADRID REPORTEDLY RETURNED TO WORK OCT 16; (C) HUNDREDS OF HOSPITAL INTERNS AT 17 HOSPITALS THROUGHOUT SPAIN CONTINUE THEIR STRIKE; (D) 3,000 WORKERS AT AUTHI (BRITISH LEYLAND MOTORS) FACTORY IN PAMPLONA HAVE BEEN LOCKED OUT BY COMPANY AS RESULT OF MYSTERIOUS FIRE WHICH DESTROYED PART OF FACTORY (AMID SUSPICION EITHER STRIKING WORKERS OR AGENTS OF NEAR-BANKRUPT COMPANY MANAGEMENT MIGHT HAVE SET FIRE); AND (E) SPANISH AIRCRAFT INDUSTRY INSTALLATIONS AT GETAFE OUTSIDE MADRID, WHICH SERVICES USAF F-4'S, AND IN SEVILLE HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY STRIKES.

2. PRINCIPAL NUCLEI OF CURRENT STRIKE WAVE, HOWEVER, REMAIN BILBAO AND BARCELONA AREAS, WHICH STILL EXPERIENCING SEVERAL IMPORTANT STRIKES. IN BILBAO, 2,500 WORKERS AT TWO GENERAL ELECTRIC (GE) PLANTS RETURNED TO WORK OCT 15 FOLLOWING COMPANY LOCKOUT IN RETALIATION FOR EARLIER STRIKE, ONLY TO STAGE A RENEWED SIT-IN STRIKE UPON READMISSION, WHICH IN TURN PROMPTED THEIR EVICTION BY POLICE AND ANOTHER LOCKOUT BY COMPANY, THIS TIME INDEFINITELY. ALSO IN BILBAO, 3,500 WORKERS AT BABCOCK AND WILCOX STEEL MILL, IN PATTERN ALMOST IDENTICAL WITH GE WORKERS, WERE READMITTED OCT 14 AFTER EARLIER STRIKE AND LOCKOUT, ONLY TO PROMPTLY STRIKE AGAIN AND THEN BE LOCKED OUT BY COMPANY UNTIL OCT 21.

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3. IN BARCELONA AREA, RECENT AND CURRENT STRIKES HAVE INCLUDED: (A) 4,000 WORKERS AT HISPANO-OLIVETTI TYPE-WRITER FACTORY, WHOSE ONE WEEK STRIKE ENDED OCT 14; (B) STRIKE OF 2,000 WORKERS AT PIRELLI TIRE FACTORY, WHICH CONTINUES; (C) INTERMITTENT STRIKES AMONG SECTIONS OF 20,000 WORKER SEAT PLANT, WHICH LIKELY CONTINUE; AND (D) STRIKES AT VARIOUS TEXTILE MILLS IN WAKE OF FILING OF

NUMEROUS BANKRUPTCY PETITIONS IN RECENT WEEKS BY FIRMS
FROM FINANCIALLY DEPRESSED BARCELONA TEXTILE SECTOR.

4. PRINCIPAL MOTIVE BEHIND STRIKES IS USUALLY OF
ECONOMIC OR LABOR NATURE. THUS CAUSES CURRENT SPANISH
STRIKE WAVE INCLUDE: (A) DEMANDS FOR REVISION EXISTING
COLLECTIVE BARGAINING CONTRACTS TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF RAPIDLY
INCREASING COST OF LIVING AND OF GOVT'S RECENT ELIMINATION
OF WAGE INCREASE GUIDELINES; (B) SIZEABLE WAGE INCREASE
DEMANDS CONNECTED CURRENT EXPIRY AND RENEGOTIATION MANY
IMPORTANT COLLECTIVE BARGAINING CONTRACTS; (C) DEMANDS
FOR IMMEDIATE REPLACEMENT OF MANY LEGALLY RECOGNIZED SHOP
STEWARDS WHOM WORKERS CLAIM FAIL TO TRULY REPRESENT THEIR
INTERESTS VIS-A-VIS MANAGEMENT; (C) FIRINGS AND DISCIPLINARY
MEASURES DIRECTED AGAINST WORKERS INVOLVED IN LABOR
AGITATION, WHICH PROVOKE FURTHER STRIKES; (E) UNCERTAINTY
SURROUNDING JOB SECURITY IN FIRMS AND SECTORS EXPERIENCING
SERIOUS ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES (E.G., AUTHI IN PAMPLONA AND
BARCELONA TEXTILE SECTOR); AND (F) ALLEGATIONS THAT SOME
SOME COMPANIES HAVE SOUGHT TO PROVOKE WORKERS TO STRIKE IN
ORDER TO BE ABLE FIRE "UNDESIRABLE" STRIKERS, TEMPORARILY
CEASE PRODUCTION, AND OTHER MOTIVES.

5. NOTWITHSTANDING PRIMARY ECONOMIC MOTIVATIONS, MOST OF
LARGER STRIKES HAVE BEEN USED, ONCE THEY HAVE ERUPTED, BY
CLANDESTINE LABOR OPPOSITION GROUPS, WHO HAVE RAPIDLY
POLITICIZED STRIKES. ALTHOUGH COMMUNIST-DOMINATED WORKERS
COMMISSIONS, THE PRINCIPAL CLANDESTINE LABOR GROUP, HAS
BEEN PROMINENT IN SOME STRIKES, PERHAPS MOST NOTABLE
FEATURE PRESENT STRIKE SCENE IS FACT LEADING CLANDESTINE
LABOR GROUPS IN SEVERAL STRIKES HAVE BEEN NON-COMMUNIST,
PERHAPS A SIGN OF INCREASED VITALITY BY SOME OF THESE
GROUPS AT EXPENSE OF COMMUNISTS. THUS COMMUNIST-DOMINATED
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WORKERS COMMISSIONS REPORTEDLY HAVE BEEN PRINCIPAL
GROUP INVOLVED IN BOTH SEAT AND PIRELLI STRIKES, BUT IN
HISPANO-OLIVETTI STRIKE MODERATE CATHOLIC US (UNION
SINDICAL OBRERA) WAS PREDOMINANT ELEMENT, IN RENAULT
STRIKE BOTH USO AND CATHOLIC EXTREMIST ORT (ORGANIZA-
CION REVOLUCIONARIA DE TRABAJADORES) WERE PRINCIPAL
GROUPS, IN GENERAL ELECTRIC STRIKE MODERATE SOCIALIST
UGT (UNION GENERAL DE TRABAJADORES) IS MAIN ELEMENT, AND
AT ROBERTO BOSCH STRIKE ORT HAS BEEN MOST PREDOMINANT
GROUP. DESPITE CONTINUED COMMUNIST CALLS FOR A GENERAL
STRIKE AND SOME LOOSE COORDINATION BETWEEN SOME OF THESE
GROUPS, MOST CURRENT STRIKES APPEAR TO HAVE ARISEN
SPONTANEOUSLY OVER LOCAL LABOR ISSUES AT SPECIFIC PLANTS
OR COMPANIES.

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6. MUCH ATTENTION IS STILL FOCUSED ON (A) THE ARREST OF 200 STRIKERS AND SUPPORTERS OF THE ROBERTO BOSCH STRIKE, INCLUDING REPORTEDLY SEVERAL ORT NATIONAL LEADERS AND THREE PRIESTS, AT A CHURCH IN THE MADRID WORKING CLASS SUBURB OF VALLECAS ON OCT 5, AND ON (B) THE ARREST OF 47 PERSONS, MOSTLY CATALAN COMMUNISTS, AT A CONVENT NEAR BARCELONA ON OCT 6 WHILE PLANNING STRATAGEY IN CONNECTION WITH THE INTERMITTENT SEAT STRIKES (REFTEL).

7. OCT 6 BARCELONA ARRESTS REVEALED AN INTERESTING CONNECTION OF ITALIAN LABOR MOVEMENT WITH SEAT STRIKE. AMONG 47 PERSONS ARRESTED AT CONVENT NEAR BARCELONA WERE FOUR ITALIAN TRADE UNIONISTS FROM FIAT PLANT IN TURIN. THEY HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AS PAOLO PRIERI, GIAMPAOLO DETONI, LUCIANO PREGNOLATO, AND ESTAFANO COSIMO. ONE
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CLANDESTINE LABOR SOURCE HAS TOLD EMB LABATT THAT ALL FOUR ITALIANS WERE FROM COMMUNIST-DOMINATED CGIL METALWORKERS UNION, WHEREAS ANOTHER SOURCE CLAIMED THAT ONLY TWO WERE FROM FIOM-CGIL, AND OTHER TWO WERE FROM UILM AND FIM-CISL UNIONS, THUS REFLECTING UNITARY ITALIAN COMMUNIST-SOCIALIST-CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC METALWORKERS APPROACH. MOST INTERESTING ASPECT THESE DETENTIONS IS APPARENT CLOSE COORDINATION BETWEEN ITALIAN UNIONS, PARTICULARLY CGIL, AND COMMUNIST-DOMINATED WORKERS COMMISSIONS AT SEAT. THIS IS NOT FIRST INSTANCE SUCH COLLABORATION, AND ITALIAN INVOLVEMENT WAS REPORTED IN FAMOUS 1971 SEAT STRIKE. ALLEGEDLY SEAT (WHICH IS HALF OWNED BY ITALY'S FIAT AND HALF BY SPANISH GOVT'S INI) HAS REPORTEDLY SOMETIMES SHIFTED PRODUCTION OF FIAT COMPONENTS TO BARCELONA SEAT PLANT DURING FIAT STRIKES IN ITALY, AND ALLEGEDLY MAY HAVE BEEN DOING SO IN CURRENT SITUATION. FOUR ARRESTED ITALIAN TRADE UNIONISTS WERE EXPELLED FROM SPAIN WITHIN TWO DAYS OF THEIR ARREST.

8. SUPPORT FOR WORKERS COMMISSIONS AT SEAT BY ITALIAN CGIL IS NOT ONLY CASE OF PRACTICAL INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION SUPPORT FOR SPANISH STRIKES INVOLVING MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS DURING RECENT MONTHS. ON TWO DIFFERENT OCCASIONS THIS SPRING, A MODERATE SPANISH CLANDESTINE TRADE UNION, I.E., CATHOLIC USO, WAS ABLE TO ENLIST AID OF AN INTERNATIONAL TRADE SECRETARIAT TO WHICH IT BELONGED IN STRIKES IN WHICH ITS MEMBERS WERE INVOLVED. THESE WERE (A) A STRIKE AT SOLVAY PLASTICS FACTORY IN BARCELONA, WHICH IS A SUBSIDIARY OF A BELGIAN PARENT COMPANY; AND (B) A STRIKE AT LA CEDA CHEMICAL FIRM IN BARCELONA, WHICH IS SUBSIDIARY OF THE DUTCH AKZO MULTINATIONAL CORPORATION. IN BOTH CASES USO APPEALED TO THE INTERNATIONAL CHEMICAL WORKERS' FEDERATION (ICF) TO APPLY PRESSURE ON THE PARENT COMPANIES, AND IN BOTH CASES THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE ICF, CHARLES LEVINSON, APPLIED SUCH PRESSURE AND THE PARENT FIRMS PROMPTLY TOLD THEIR SPANISH AFFILIATES TO SETTLE THEIR STRIKES ON TERMS FAVORABLE TO THE WORKERS, WHICH THE COMPANIES DID. THE EFFECTIVE INTERVENTION OF THE ICF IN THESE TWO STRIKES RESULTED IN BOOSTING USO'S STOCK AMONG CERTAIN WORKER SEGMENTS. THE USO HAS ALSO BEEN RECEIVING MORAL AND

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MATERIAL SUPPORT IN RECENT YEARS FROM THE INTERNATIONAL METALWORKER'S FEDERATION (IMF) TO WHICH IT

ALSO BELONGS, AND MAINTAINS PARTICULARLY CLOSE CONTACT
WITH IMF ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL DANIEL BEDEDICT.

9. EXPERIENCE TO DATE THIS YEAR, SUCH AS ITALIAN
INVOLVEMENT IN SEAT STRIKE, AND ICF SUPPORT IN USO
STRIKES, MAY SIGNIFY AN INCREASING TREND FOR PRACTICAL
AND DIRECT INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR DIVERSE SPANISH
CLANDESTINE TRADE UNION GROUPS. PERHAPS LEAST EFFECTIVE
TO DATE HAVE BEEN ICFTU AND ETUC, WHO HAVE GIVEN
THEIR TWO SPANISH CLANDESTINE TRADE UNION AFFILIATES,
I.E., THE SOCIALIST UGT ANT THE BASQUE STV (SOLIDARIDAD
DE TRABAJADORES VASCOS), LITTLE MORE THAN MORAL SUPPORT.
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Message Attributes

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